

1692

T H E C A S E O F T H E Distressed O R P H A N S Of the C I T Y of L O N D O N.

TH E Aldermen being their Guardians, and Sworn to maintain their Rights.— And having forc'd the Portions of about 1400 of them into their Chamber, on pain of Imprisonment.— And by their prodigious Feastings, Presents, and like Imbezlements of their Deposites, becoming Indebted to them above 500000. l. — And taking up above 100000. l. at Interest, on pretence to pay off some Orphans:— And looking on themselves to be above Law, because of their vast Revenue:— And fearing no Process, because themselves had the Issues which they Forfeited:— They declar'd themselves Bankrupts, — defid their Creditors, — and order'd paying them but 6 d. per Pound for their respective Debts.

1684. 10. October. The poor Orphans Petitioning the King thereupon, the Honorable Mr. Finch Reported that Order to be Unreasonable and against Common Right:— And thereupon it was ordered to be Revoked, and Payment of Interest to be continued, till they were in Capacity to pay the Principal:— And the same was Revoked and Ordered accordingly.

5 March. The Orphans soon after Petition'd the Honourable House of Commons. — They order'd an account to be brought in of the City's Revenue: But by the Account deliver'd in, they had no more than 54 l. per. an. above the necessary Charge of their Government: And they prevail'd to have the same believ'd.

1685. Discoveries being made that they had Estate enough to pay their Debts:— And that on Inspection of their Records, and Rentals, it should be manifested even to themselves:— And several of the Particulars being instanced in to them before Sir William Turner, Sir William Prichard and Sir Joseph Herne, whom the Orphans prevailed upon to be Present; the Orphans thereupon began to be Importunate, and thereby obtain'd an Order for Inspection; And that all Improvements of any Branch of their Revenue over and above the necessary support of their Government, should be applied to their Relief; And that the Discoverers should be Recompenc'd.

1687. 17 January. No Inspection being permitted notwithstanding:— And the Discoverers being Abused instead of being Encouraged:— And the said Guardians having to the Second of May, 1685, paid out of the Cole Duty 520037 l. 15 s. 2 d. but not the third part thereof according to their Trust; and great part thereof being paid for what they ow'd and Interest, but no Penny thereof to the Starving Orphans. And 6996 l. 4 s. 8 d. being given to those who promis'd to detect the Frauds of that Duty, but never brought in 6 d. And they who shew'd them how to pay their Debts, were paid only with Affronts. — And 149730 l. of the poor Orphans Monies being lent to the Creatures of their Guardians, and not one Penny of it got back: Many of the Orphans not being able to bear the Extremities they were reduced to for want of their Portions, made away themselves, and others took wicked Courses, to the Ruine of Body and Soul.

1. March. The House of Lords Compassionating these Poor Creatures, sent down a Bill for appointing Commissioners to Enquire into the City's Estate; but the Aldermen opposing it, and promising to Execute it themselves, it went no further.

1690. The Discoveries were then Prosecuted before the Committee of Common Council; and a Report was obtain'd under the Hands of Sir William Turner, Sir John Moor, Sir William Prichard, Sir Samuel Dashwood, Sir Thomas Vernon, and several other worthy Citizens, that they could spare 8000 l. per Ann.

1691. 11. May. The Lords sent down a Bill to Confirm this:— The Aldermen petition'd for it likewise, — but privately Oppos'd it, and endeavoured to have the Subject Taxed to pay them 16000 l. per Ann. and thereby stopp'd it. A Noble Peer offer'd them 10000 l. per Ann. for that which they made not 6 d. of, but they would not vouchsafe to refer it.

1692. July. To stop the Orphans Mouths this Sessions, a Petition was presented, but the Orphans were advised not to appear, but leave it to the Aldermen. — They did so: The House Order'd an Account to be brought in of their Estate, but they have concealed the greatest part of it.

On the 24th Instant, they Petitioned their Guardians, and made them a more Advantageous Proposal and Security by Citizens, above all Exception, to perform it; but they would not accept it.

Finding themselves thus Treated, — And so much of this Sessions spent, they presented a Petition of their own, — And the House with great Charity, Order'd to Consider of it this day.

They with all thankfulness acknowledge the Favour, and with most Humble Importunity Beseech,

1. That the Quantum for the necessary Support of the City's Government may be ascertain'd. And such part of their Estate may be appropriated to it, as your great Wisdoms shall think sufficient, regard being had to their Ancient usage of Raising Monys by Fifteens for all Publick Occasions.
2. That all the rest of their Estate, and all the Profits which legally may be raised out of any of their undoubted Rights, may be appropriated to the paying of their Debts, as your Wisdoms shall appoint; and as themselves have ordered.
3. That the six Years Interest now due may be forthwith paid, many of the Fatherless and Widows being in rags, and wanting Bread.
4. That the Proposals ready to be made your Honours for improving the said 8000 l. per Annum. to a sufficient Fund to pay 4 l. per Cent. for Ever; for what the City owes may be Examined, and if your Honours approve of them, and of the Security for Performance; they may be confirmed.
5. That after the said Debts are paid off, or satisfied by virtue of the said Discoveries, all the remainder of the Profits arising thereby, may be appropriated to, and for the Advantage of the said City, as your Honours shall appoint.

Lastly, That in case any of the said Aldermen shall make any Opposition hereunto, they may be accountable for their respective Male-Administrations out of their own Estates, as other Guardians by Law, are — And that like Process may be awarded against them, as against other Bankrupts — And that they may have no more of the Orphans Monys to carry on, or defend themselves in oppressing the Fatherless and Widows, to the high displeasure of their Avenger, who is Almighty: And to the Scandal, not only of this Nation, but of Christianity it self.

The Grocers Company soon paid their Debts, when their Hall and Rents were Sequestred.

January 28,
1692.